

## **The Absent Museum**

*Blueprint for a museum of contemporary art for the capital of Europe*

To celebrate our 10th anniversary, WIELS presents a large-scale exhibition to be held not only at our fully refurbished Blomme building, but also in the two adjacent buildings, which were also formerly part of the Wielemans brewery site. *The Absent Museum* presents around 45 artists based in (or with close ties to) the European Metropolitan Region (BRU, London, Köln, Paris, Amsterdam). It features work by artists living and working in this large region, many linked to Brussels 'capital of Europe' either today or in the recent past. There is a prospective element to the exhibition, exploring transnational identities, with a historical awareness of the new conditions of cultural and artistic interaction. It also looks back on key works of artists who have addressed crucial dramatic moments of Belgian history, many of which are either minimised or totally absent from the country's museums of fine art.

The title, which could come straight from a symbolist novella by Edgar Poe, is a nod to the decisive influence that symbolist, 'mystical-mysterious' thinking has had and continues to have on Belgian modernity. It places the issue of the museum's role in the public debate firmly in the spotlight. Although museums – especially those devoted to contemporary art – have never been as popular as they are today, they are still notably absent from the public space and their voice goes unheard in the formation of public opinion.

WIELS does not view itself as a museum, and certainly isn't one. Nevertheless, it is popularly and commonly referred to as 'WIELS museum'. This is a token not only of recognition, but also of the expectations that the Belgian audience/public opinion holds towards WIELS as an institution. WIELS is a platform for and interface between artistic visions, current theory and broadly based debates in society. It flows logically from this that WIELS should mark its tenth birthday by helping to set out a substantive framework or blueprint for a 'possible' museum of contemporary art for Brussels. This project will therefore be both a look back over the journey WIELS has made so far and an exploration of its future development. In the process, this local discussion will be anchored within an international perspective of art and the global.

The opening in April 2017 coincides with that of the ArtBrussels art fair and occurs one week before the opening of Kunstenfestivaldesarts, with which WIELS is working closely – the first time these two important platforms will collaborate on a large scale. Kunstenfestivaldesarts is a well-known interdisciplinary and experimental platform for innovative forms of theatre, choreography, music and literature, which will now be complemented by contemporary visual arts at WIELS. This will promote Brussels – internationally and to a broad audience – as a vibrant and attractive city for innovative arts.

### **With:**

Felix Nussbaum, Stanley Brouwn, Walter Swennen, Guillaume Bijl, Jo Baer, Ellen Gallagher, Jef Geys, Le Mur, Francis Alÿs, Marlene Dumas, Nil Yalter, Marcel Broodthaers, Wesley Meuris, Martin Kippenberger, Jimmie Durham, Jean-Luc Moulène, Rosemarie Trockel, Oscar Murillo, Jana Euler, Richard Venlet, Dewar-Gicquel, Mark Manders, Peter Wächtler, Olivier Foulon, Lucie McKenzie, Carsten Höller, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Manuel Graf, Monika Baer, Goska Macuga, Otobong Nkanga

### **Curated by Dirk Snauwaert**

**together with Zoë Gray, Frédérique Versaen, Caroline Dumalin & Charlotte Friling.**

**Catalogue edited by Dirk Snauwaert and coordinated by Charlotte Friling**

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